War Stories Unveiled

https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1BoWsBzvGM/

When 13 Japanese Planes Attacked One P-51 — This Rookie's Response Stunned Command.

January 11th, 1945.
07:32, Muro Airstrip, Philippines.

Captain William Shomo climbed into the cockpit of his F-6D Mustang while ground crewmen finished fueling the tanks for what should have been another routine photo reconnaissance run over northern Luzon. The kind of mission he'd flown so many times it had become a rhythm: low altitude, below radar, cameras clicking, strafe anything that moved, bring the film home.

He was twenty-six. Two hundred and three combat missions. One aerial victory.

Not because he couldn't fight—because he almost never got the chance.

For sixteen months with the 82nd Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, Shomo had lived the unglamorous war. New Guinea coast. Morotai. One rough strip after another. Endless flights over empty beaches and wrecked supply dumps. He'd flown P-39 Airacobras and P-40 Warhawks, short-legged aircraft that couldn't reach the airspace where Japanese fighters still hunted. The P-38s and P-47s got the glory, the aces, the names.

Shomo got photographs.

Before the war, he'd worked as an undertaker in Pittsburgh. He'd studied embalming. He knew what it meant to prepare bodies for burial, to make death presentable for the living. Now he was supposed to take pictures while other pilots became legends.

Then, in December 1944, his squadron finally got Mustangs—armed reconnaissance versions of the P-51. Longer range. Better speed. Cameras in the fuselage, guns still in the wings. For the first time in months, it felt like the sky might actually offer him something besides flak and boredom.

On January 9th, Shomo flew his first combat mission in the new Mustang and got his first real kill—an enemy Val dive bomber caught landing at Tuguegarao. One burst. Flames. After 202 missions, one victory—technically an air-to-air kill, but it didn't feel like a dogfight. It felt like finally being allowed to breathe.

The next morning, he was airborne again.

Same mission. Same route. Check the airfields at Tuguegarao, Aparri, and Laoag. Photograph enemy activity. Strafe targets if the opportunity presented itself.

His wingman was Lieutenant Paul Lipscomb.

Two F-6D Mustangs skimming north at 500 feet, riding the deck to stay under radar coverage, the cameras in their bellies waiting like silent witnesses.

The weather was perfect. Clear skies. Unlimited visibility.

Perfect for photography.

Perfect for spotting enemy aircraft.

At around 0900, Shomo looked up.

Two thousand feet above them, coming south on a steady course, was a formation that made his stomach tighten.

He counted quickly.

Twelve fighters—Kawasaki Ki-61 Tonys—and one Nakajima Ki-44 Tojo.

Thirteen fighters total.

And with them, tucked into the formation like the reason they existed, a twin-engine bomber: a Mitsubishi G4M "Betty."

Thirteen Japanese aircraft.

Two American Mustangs.

The smart move was obvious: stay low, stay unseen, let them pass, finish the reconnaissance, go home. Nobody would question it. That's what reconnaissance pilots did—bring home information, not stories.

But Shomo had waited sixteen months for a moment like this. He'd flown over enemy territory two hundred times and barely seen the enemy in the air. Yesterday's kill had been a bomber on final approach—easy. Almost unfair.

This—this was real...

(NOTE: THIS IS ONLY PART OF THE STORY, THE ENTIRE STORY AND THE EXCITING ENDING ARE IN THE LINK BELOW THE COMMENT) See less